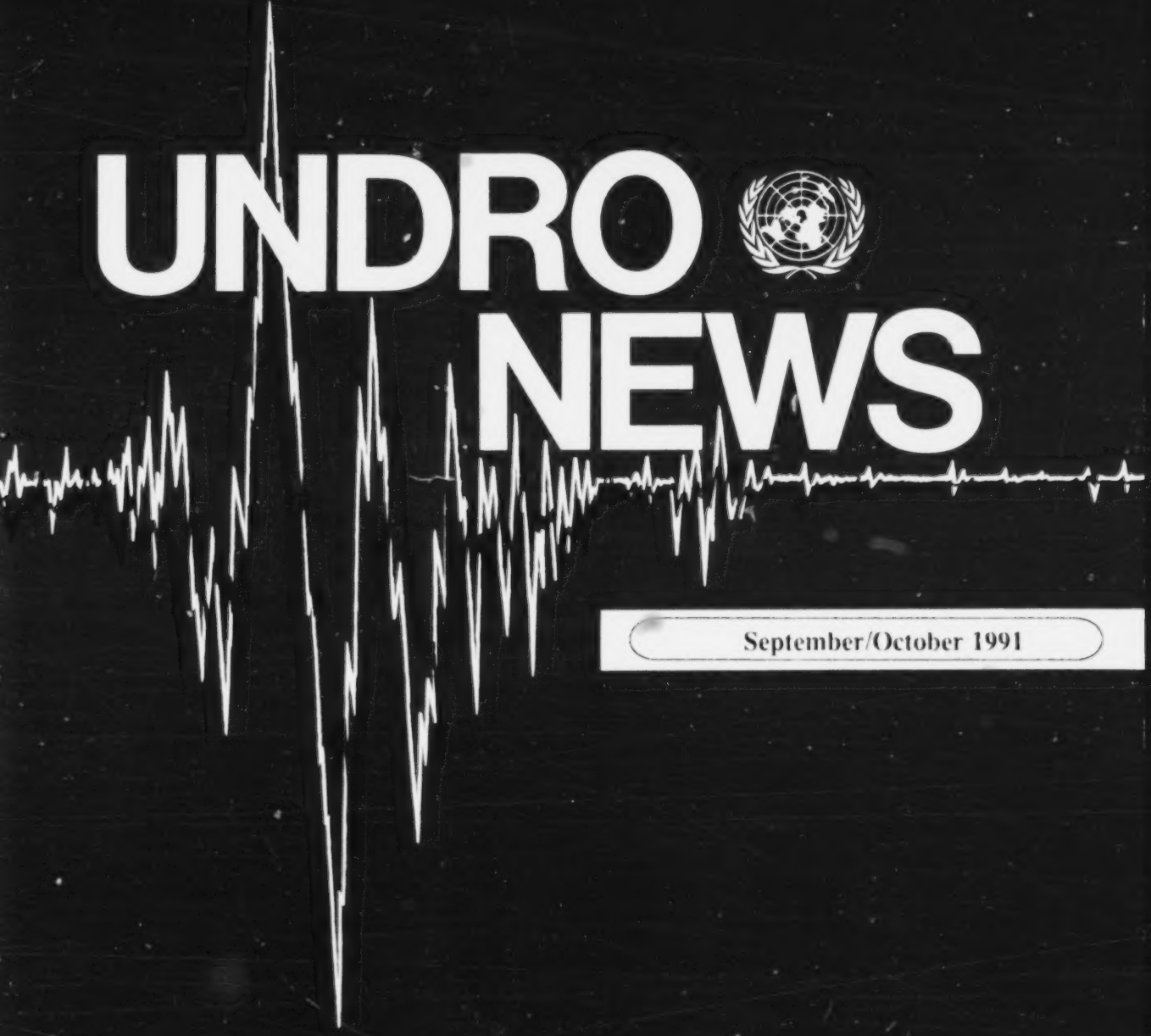
UNDRO NEWS



September/October 1991

- Catastrophes : Nouvel ordre mondial et devoir d'ingérence
- Fourth Meeting of NERS Officials

OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DISASTER RELIEF
CO-ORDINATOR

BUREAU DU COORDONNATEUR
DES NATIONS UNIES POUR LES
SECOURS EN CAS
DE CATASTROPHE

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Editorial

Disaster reduction, environment, development - these were the issues united by the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, celebrated on 9 October, under the slogan: a "Challenge for the 90s". The relevance of such a slogan is all too clear.

During the past two decades natural disasters have cost the lives of some three million people, affected at least 800 million others, and in 1990 alone caused economic losses of US $47 billion. The havoc, hardship and human suffering inferred by these figures is surely sufficient to galvanize us to greater efforts to minimise the effects of natural disasters.

It can be claimed that the beginnings of such an energetic response have already occurred: since the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was launched in January 1990, nearly 100 national committees and focal points have been established in all regions of the world to stimulate and co-ordinate disaster mitigation activities.

The Special High-Level Council of the Decade, at its inaugural session in New York on 10 October, declared, inter alia, *that the Decade offers an extraordinary opportunity to reduce the impact of natural disasters, given adequate world-wide awareness and resources directed towards that goal. The Council also stressed that the resultant mitigation actions should be linked with similar actions in dealing with man-made and environmental disasters.*

Environnement, développement, atténuation des catastrophes : ces trois grandes questions se sont trouvées réunies sous un même slogan, le 9 octobre, Journée internationale de la prévention des catastrophes naturelles; un "Défi pour les années 90". La signification d'un tel message est on ne peut plus claire.

Les catastrophes naturelles ont coûté la vie à environ trois millions de personnes et en ont affecté au moins 800 millions au cours de ces vingt dernières années. Les pertes économiques qu'elles ont infligées se sont, quant à elles, élevées à 47 milliards de dollars pour la seule année 90. Ces chiffres illustrent un tel degré de souffrances et de dévastations, avec toutes les épreuves que cela entraîne, qu'ils devraient suffire à mobiliser et à intensifier nos efforts afin d'atténuer les effets des catastrophes naturelles.

Il est vrai qu'une réponse énergique dans ce sens a commencé à se manifester. Depuis le lancement de la Décennie internationale de la prévention des catastrophes naturelles en janvier 1990, une centaine de groupes et de comités nationaux ont été mis en place dans différentes régions du monde afin de stimuler et d'encourager la mise en oeuvre de mécanismes d'atténuation des catastrophes.

Le Conseil spécial de haut niveau de la Décennie a déclaré, inter alia, *lors de sa session d'ouverture à New York le 10 octobre, que la Décennie représentait une occasion unique de réduire l'impact des catastrophes naturelles, à condition de bénéficier d'une prise de conscience à l'échelle mondiale et de ressources lui permettant d'atteindre son objectif. Le Conseil a également souligné la nécessité d'associer les mesures de prévention qui seraient prises à des mesures similaires quant aux désastres causés par l'homme et aux problèmes de l'environnement.*

As a result of the impetus provided by the IDNDR, many countries that had not implemented preparedness and prevention measures are beginning to take steps to reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters. Such a growth in awareness of the need for disaster mitigation is one of the key concepts of the Decade, with training and information forming its central strategies.

Urgent action which still needs to be taken includes global investment in the prediction of disasters as well as in the improvement of disaster-resistance designs for buildings, the use of the media and educational institutions to promote awareness of the need for disaster mitigation, the incorporation of disaster reduction activities into plans for achieving sustainable development, and increased emphasis on the need for environmental action to avoid many such catastrophes.

Despite the severity of the natural disasters which a number of countries suffered this summer, this is a time not for despair, but for hope; a time to embrace a "challenge for the 90s". For the consequence of this slogan could, indeed should, be the achievement of vastly improved disaster mitigation measures throughout the world by the year 2000. With the co-operation of all concerned UNDRO has set out to play its central role in this endeavour.

Résultat de l'élan insufflé par la Décennie : plusieurs pays qui n'avaient pas encore pris de mesures, au niveau de la prévention, commencent à aller de l'avant afin de réduire leur vulnérabilité face aux catastrophes naturelles. Cette prise de conscience de plus en plus grande est un des concepts clés de la Décennie dont les fondements reposent sur la formation et l'information.

Il faut, à tout prix, prendre un certain nombre de mesures d'urgence, telles que s'investir tous ensemble dans la prévision des catastrophes ainsi que dans l'amélioration de la conception d'édifices pouvant mieux résister à un désastre, promouvoir, par le biais des médias et des systèmes éducatifs, la prise de conscience du besoin d'atténuer les catastrophes. Il faut aussi que les mesures de réduction des catastrophes soient intégrées dans des plans afin d'aboutir à un développement soutenu, et mettre de plus en plus l'accent sur la nécessité d'agir en faveur de l'environnement.

En dépit des graves catastrophes qui ont frappé plusieurs pays au cours de l'été 1991, nous sommes dans une période d'espérance et non de désespoir. C'est le moment ou jamais de relever ce "défi des années 90". En effet, ce slogan pourrait, et devrait, nous permettre d'accomplir des progrès non négligeables dans l'atténuation des catastrophes à travers le monde et ce, d'ici à l'an 2000. L'UNDRO est fermement décidé à continuer de jouer un rôle central dans l'accomplissement de cette tâche vitale.

IDNDR **UNITED NATIONS** **UNDRO**

Fourth Meeting of NERS Officials

UNDRO hosted the Fourth Meeting of Officials in Charge of National Emergency Relief Services (NERS IV) in Geneva from 1 to 2 October 1991. The purpose of these meetings is to provide government officials in charge of formulating and implementing national policies in the area of international emergency relief assistance with an opportunity to consult periodically with UNDRO, and with their colleagues from other countries. These mostly technical meetings are particularly concerned with concrete and practical measures designed to further strengthen emergency disaster management through international collaboration in disaster relief and mitigation.

Previous meetings were held in 1986, 1987 and 1989. Delegates from 34 countries, and the European Community, attended the NERS IV meeting, at which Mr. J.E.J.M. van Voorst tot Voorst of the Netherlands was elected Chairman. We reproduce below edited extracts from the Chairman's summary highlighting the primary considerations, endorsements and recommendations made at the meeting.

■ Delegates were informed of the progress of UNDRO's efforts in improving disaster management, as reported by the Co-ordinator and UNDRO's Director, and seemed appreciative of the straightforward and realistic outline of the Office's current capabilities and future potential.

■ In their presentations, they prescribed the strengthening of UNDRO as the logical and cost-effective solution to fulfil, within the next five years, the following requirement: effective support to the Secretary-General, enhancement of preparedness in the United Nations system, reliable and timely exchange of disaster information, and support of mitigation at the country level.

■ In order to reach this capability the Office foresees the need for:

- ❑ continuous efforts to enhance staff effectiveness;
- ❑ increased information management capacities;
- ❑ improvement of system-wide linkages and interaction with donors and recipients;
- ❑ a continuous review of policies and operational strategy, and
- ❑ the creation of a solid financial basis.

■ Whilst supporting the need for strengthened leadership in international disaster management, the Office's unique feature of covering the disaster continuum, comprising both response and mitigation, was underlined.

■ In considering UNDRO's presentation on recent major emergency situations, the meeting:

- ❑ highlighted the need for UNDRO to take a leadership role in establishing advance arrangements and promoting continuous interaction between and among other organizations with vested operational interests;
- ❑ underlined the importance of pre-disaster planning and disaster mitigation and encouraged UNDRO to take the lead in co-ordinating these efforts with the United Nations;

❑ acknowledged the value of early-warning systems.

■ The meeting took note of the report on the status and the positive impact of the UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Training Programme and reiterated the importance of disaster management training at large, both at the global and national levels. It explicitly endorsed the continuation of the programme, and noted the announcement of financial support from various delegations. However, the desire for a broadening of the donor base was underscored.

■ In responding to the presentation of the Officer-in-Charge of the IDNDR Secretariat, the meeting underscored the goals and objectives of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, expressed satisfaction at the progress that is being achieved at last, albeit requesting an acceleration of pace. The good co-operation between the IDNDR Secretariat and the United Nations system, particularly the close association with UNDRO, was noted with satisfaction and seen as essential.

■ The meeting recommended that if UNDRO proceeds with the proposal to prepare an intergovernmental conference on a Convention on disaster communications, such a conference should be co-sponsored by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Furthermore, the Office should first prepare a document that would elaborate on those preparations and outline the objectives, the potential output, as well as the financial implications of such a conference.

■ The meeting endorsed, in general terms, the four protocols which have been formulated by the International Search and Rescue Workshop held in Wattener Lizum, Austria, in April 1991.

■ The meeting noted with particular appreciation UNDRO's clear presentation on the budget, its structure and current financial situation, as well as its future expectations and requirements. Both the delegates and UNDRO highlighted the need to solve the question of a solid financial basis for the Office, especially with regard to an adequate provision of funds within the regular budget. It also suggested that consideration be given to the creation of an advisory body of NERS representatives.

■ The meeting requested

A total of 86 participants, from donor and recipient countries, attended the NERS IV meeting. Among the items discussed were developments in disaster management since NERS III, including a review of international humanitarian involvement in recent major emergencies, e.g. the Iraq/Kuwait crisis, the cyclone in Bangladesh, floods in China, civil strife in Liberia, and drought and civil strife in the Horn of Africa.

UNDRO to work out details and criteria for establishing a practical register of existing stockpiles. At the same time it requested UNDRO, once such a register is established, to organize a workshop for organizations operating stockpiles. Both requests were made on the assumption that necessary extra-budgetary funds will be available.

■ The meeting strongly supported UNDRO's request for timely and precise reporting from donors on contributions.

■ The meeting was provided with a comprehensive presentation outlining UNDRO's activities and future views on early warning, particularly regarding co-operation and co-ordination within the UN system (e.g. ORCI, FAO, UNHCR) through a newly formed ACC Ad Hoc Working Group.

■ With respect to co-operation with NGOs, UNDRO pointed out the importance of the NGO community as implementing bodies at field level, as a major channel of funds, and as a significant source of information.

■ A detailed description was given of UNDRO's project to enhance its information management capabilities (Information, Management, Communications and Office Systems - IMCOS Phase I and beyond), which has been developed by the Office in order to be able to fulfil its role as UN focal point and clearinghouse for the collection, collation, analysis, production and dissemination of disaster-related data and information. The meeting endorsed UNDRO's request for collective support through the provision of seconded personnel, services and financial means.

Marilyn Quayle, Head of the USA delegation and a member of the IDNDR Special High Level Council, addressing the meeting.

■ The meeting stressed the importance of disaster mitigation, took note of UNDRO's conceptual and practical accomplishments in this field and encouraged the Office to pursue with vigour its mandated tasks in this respect. It also reiterated the need to integrate mitigation efforts into national development planning at large and into individual development projects.

■ The meeting was given an overview of inter-agency co-operation. From the ensuing comments, the inter-agency mechanism, as intensified during the Gulf crisis, might be seen as a possible model for a future standing machinery for consultations in large-scale emergencies and for maintaining system-wide preparedness.

■ With regard to the potential use of operational national military or civilian resources in disaster management, the meeting supported the suggestion that UNDRO explore the possibility of holding a workshop on the use of military assistance in relief operations provided that funds are made available, if required.

■ A number of specific questions were put to UNDRO based, *inter alia*, on proposals and views as discussed during the 2nd regular session of ECOSOC in July 1991, on the current deliberations in New York and on the lessons learnt from the humanitarian emergency management efforts and structures established for the various phases of the Gulf crisis. In responding, UNDRO reiterated its preference for strengthening existing inter-agency approaches and machineries, including co-ordinated interaction with governments, intergovernmental organizations and the NGO community. It confirmed the value of a central operational financial reserve, and supported the concept of consolidated and unified appeals which would be facilitated by such a fund.

■

Catastrophes : Nouvel ordre mondial et devoir d'ingérence

Extraits de la conférence donnée par Monsieur Michel Jobert le 30 juillet 1991, au Palais des Nations à Genève, sur l'invitation du Coordonnateur de l'UNDRO.

Pour commencer, si vous regardez bien le monde, ***la catastrophe future ou imminente la plus sûre, c'est la politique.*** Ce n'est pas la sécheresse, ce n'est pas la famine, qui procède souvent de la sécheresse; la catastrophe, elle est politique. Je ne sais pas où j'ai lu que la sécheresse peut être indulgente, mais la politique, qui calcule qu'il lui faut de la famine pour être de la politique, elle, n'est pas indulgente; elle est même un peu perverse. Il y a les barrages qui cèdent, il y a la mer qui enfle, les volcans qui sont désagréables et il faut intervenir. A partir de ce moment-là, on passe de l'ordre de la nature à l'ordre des humains. Avec la seule nature, ce serait trop facile : l'ordre des humains, il est là tout le temps en train de calculer. Si beaucoup de gens vivent à l'ombre des volcans, sans faire une analyse marxiste, une fatalité économique en est l'explication. Sinon ils se tiendraient éloignés, autant que faire se peut, du tragique dans notre futur et nous devrions en tenir compte.

Mais mon sujet est plutôt - si vous acceptez mon préambule que la plus grande catastrophe c'est la politique, on le voit tous les jours - mon sujet est le nouvel ordre mondial et le devoir d'ingérence : deux fantômes ! ... A un moment, on parlait du ***nouveau droit international,*** parce que l'ancien était encombrant; il y avait trop d'hypothèques qi'il fallait honorer et qu'on n'avait pas envie d'honorer. Alors on en faisait table rase; comme l'a dit notre Président : "Le droit c'est le droit." Il paraît que c'est une formule qu'on appelle une tautologie, mais elle n'est pas claire, car le droit c'est le droit, mais, au moment où on le dit, cela conduit à beaucoup d'interprétations, justement sur la vraie nature du droit. Voilà tout le débat qui s'est produit en ce qui concerne le droit, entre le mois d'août 1990 et aujourd'hui ... S'il s'agit du nouveau droit international, je suis un peu inquiet; cela voudrait dire que l'ancien ne vaut rien et qu'on va faire table rase. Je frémis d'ailleurs pour vous, souvent rattachés aux activités des Nations Unies; cela veut dire qu'elles ne comptent pas et qu'il faut inventer autre chose. Alors, je dis "soyons prudents" et, après les vagues de désinformation scientifique que nous avons subies, essayons de nous désinformer nous-mêmes, de nous débarrasser de ces doses élevées d'inhibitions qui ont mutilé notre jugement, pendant tant de mois.

"De cet ordre international nouveau qui va définir un droit sur des bases que l'on ignore, il faudrait tout de même que nous commençions à juger"

Pour parler du nouvel ordre international, il faudrait savoir qui fait quoi. Est-ce que ce sont les Etats ? Est-ce que ce sont les opinions publiques, qui sont souvent une préparation concoctée par les Etats ? Est-ce que ce sont les peuples, dont il paraît qu'ils ont une mémoire inépuisable et une capacité d'oubli provisoire, aussi inépuisable ? Est-ce que nous allons oublier les bases du droit international, si piétiné pendant quelques mois, ou bien est-ce que, revenus à plus de sagesse, les objectifs ayant été atteints et même dépassés par certains, nous nous tiendrons à ce

qui a été fait, après l'expérience de la Société des Nations (SDN) après le deuxième conflit mondial ? C'est-à-dire une marche prudente vers l'universalité; l'universalité des hommes et des femmes, des êtres humains. Car il faut toujours parler des êtres humains. Et ne pas distinguer pour savoir si les droits de l'homme sont les droits de l'homme et si les droits de la femme, on les a oubliés ... Est-ce notre perspective de rester dans ce cadre, qui a des bases très précises, qui ont été bien oubliées pendant ces derniers mois ? Les Nations Unies existent; elles sont un système qui est bâti sur deux ordres de valeurs; il y a des valeurs sûres - c'est-à-dire les Etats, les valeurs reconnues, avec leurs droits imprescriptibles, et il y a aussi les droits des êtres, que les Nations Unies ont essayé de préserver par la notion de paix. L'Article 2 de la Charte, paragraphe 7, dit, de façon claire, que les Etats ne doivent pas recourir à la guerre. Vous me direz : c'est un voeu pieux. Mais, enfin nous avons tous été d'accord pour l'inscrire et pour nous lancer l'argument au visage qu'il ne faut pas recourir à la guerre; qu'il faut trouver, épuiser les moyens d'arriver à des règlements qui ne soient pas forcément l'envoi d'une force d'intervention; dès lors qu'on dispose d'une force d'intervention, on s'en sert, c'est bien connu.

Plutôt que de faire de la politique avec des forces d'intervention, on peut peut-être relire la Charte des Nations Unies et ses articles indispensables quoique ignorés par ce qui s'est passé. Maintenant que les juristes internationaux ont été tourneboulés, la communauté internationale doit dire si elle souhaite s'en tenir aux normes actuelles ou si elle poursuit, sous une pression extérieure, d'autres buts. Beaucoup a été dit, écrit ou imposé en raisonnement par la désinformation. La parole a été arrachée aux opinions publiques. On a parlé pour elles et elles ont répondu comme les bons soldats : "présent". Mais cette période est passée où l'on s'est évadé du droit, du respect du droit, de l'application du droit. Tout cela pouvait dans l'ordre politique, et dans l'ordre humain tout court, porter des conséquences durables et fâcheuses. D'autres ont aperçu Hitler dans un coin et ont envoyé les autres se battre, contre Hitler bien entendu. Ils ont mobilisé les opinions, envoyé tout le monde au front, mais sans avoir eu le geste, honorable, de mettre en accord leur raisonnement et leur devoir de citoyens en s'engageant dans les unités combattantes. Informer, influencer par conséquent, est un acte important qui justifie que l'on s'engage. Intellectuellement, cela ne suffit pas; comme il ne suffit pas de payer des mercenaires pour aller se battre. Nous abordons le thème de la morale individuelle et peut-être de la morale collective. Maintenant que nous pouvons réfléchir, maintenant que beaucoup de gens se sont accommodés de "Hitler", contre qui nous devions nous battre, interrogeons-nous sur le nouvel ordre international. De cet ordre international nouveau, qui va définir un droit sur des bases que l'on ignore, il faudrait tout de même que nous commençions à juger...

"... La période est bonne pour passer de la 'real politik' aux réalités..."
(M. Jobert)

Dans un monde qui est très respectueux des Etats, essayons alors de verser progressivement une recherche de l'universel, dans le détail.

"Les Droits de l'homme sont vraiment l'expression de l'Universel"

Les détails, ce sont les êtres humains. Car, après tout, sommes-nous différents ? Il n'y a pas de droits de l'homme, pour les uns, qui soient différents des droits de l'homme pour les autres. Que ces droits de l'homme soient plus gênants pour certains Etats que pour d'autres, cela va de soi, on le voit. Mais les

droits de l'homme sont vraiment l'expression de l'universel. Tous les efforts sont faits justement pour définir ce qu'il y a d'universel dans notre planète, qui est toute petite, on le sait. Les choses sont la propriété de tous et la responsabilité de tous : c'est l'air, les matières premières, au-delà de nous-mêmes, de notre biotope, tout cela c'est notre identité, à nous tous. Il ne s'agit pas des Etats, il s'agit des autres qui seraient nous-mêmes. Nous ne savons pas que les autres sont nous-mêmes, bien entendu. Mais si nous faisons un petit effort, nous nous apercevons qu'en effet les autres sont nous-mêmes. Bien des pays n'en sont pas encore là. Il y a ceux qui pensent qu'ils sont "les autres", et personne ne se rend compte qu'ils ont autant de droits. Il y a ceux qui pensent qu'ils ont bâti leur petit univers et qu'ils doivent l'imposer aux autres. Il est urgent que le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, que les membres du Conseil de sécurité, à l'unanimité désormais stupéfiante, à la prochaine Assemblée générale, disent que nous sommes toujours dans le même effort, dans le même sillon, et donnent de nombreux encouragements pour aller vers des progrès. Ou si, au contraire, on a décidé de s'asseoir allègrement sur quelques principes. Et qu'on dise aussi ce qui doit être remis en cause.

"Avant de se lancer tête baissée dans l'univers de l'ingérence, il faut savoir ce que nous voulons et pour qui"

Ainsi du droit d'ingérence, dont il faudra bien s'expliquer. Le préalable c'est qu'on ne touche pas aux frontières. Evidemment, il est dangereux de toucher aux frontières. Mais sans qu'on y touche de façon délibérée, les frontières bougent. Elles bougent dans l'esprit des gens qu'elles contiennent ou qu'elles restreignent. Je prends l'exemple de l'Afrique et je vais vous surprendre : bien sûr qu'il faut que l'Afrique revoie ses frontières. Dans le désordre, non. C'était très beau que l'Organisation de l'unité africaine (OUA) ait décidé que l'on ne toucherait pas aux frontières de la colonisation. Est-ce que les êtres humains, africains ou d'autres régions, le désirent ? Désirent-ils autre chose ? En Europe aussi, on en parle. Est-ce le corollaire de cette liberté qu'elle a repris, d'aller reconnaître les aspirations confuses, désordonnées, peut-être brutales, peut-être mal dominées des peuples ? Est-ce que le corollaire de cette reconnaissance-là ne passe pas aussi par la promotion, l'identique étant reconnu en chacun, de groupements régionaux ? Il va bien falloir que l'Afrique se groupe. Ce n'est pas clair, c'est difficile, car elle ne veut pas se grouper avec des frontières artificielles, ou alors elle grouperait des désordres potentiels. Il faut que les limites soient rectifiées, que les peuples ne soient pas coupés en morceaux, qu'ils retrouvent une unité s'ils la désirent. S'ils ne la désirent pas, il ne faut pas forcer les gens à faire ce qu'ils ont oublié. Mais s'ils n'ont pas oublié, il faudra bien qu'ils retrouvent leur unité. Or, les Etats aiment le confort et ont horreur du changement. Ce changement, il faut donc l'organiser, dès lors qu'il est fatal, sauf à aller à la catastrophe. Voilà des notions qu'il va bien falloir oser aborder. Préférons-nous avoir des poussières d'Etats ou des Etats difficiles et comment aller vers de plus grandes conjonctions ? La période est bonne pour passer de la "real politik" aux réalités.

Nombreux écrivent sur ce sujet et ils aperçoivent le réalisme, puis l'universalisme. Ils pourraient aussi se soucier de savoir si le droit des Etats est une construction juridique, intellectuelle ou s'il est aussi la reconnaissance du droit des autres. Les Romains avaient découvert le ***jus gentium***, le droit des autres. Quant aux constructions juridiques, peut-être devrions-nous accepter de

M. M. Jobert (à gauche) et M. M. Essaafi, Coordonnateur de l'UNDRO.

(Continued on page 25)

Managing the Environment: An African Dimension

The problem of environmental catastrophe through, inter alia, *global warming and the greenhouse effect is well known, but we need to be reminded of this continuing threat to our planet. The following article is such a timely reminder, particularly in the lead up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in 1992. It deals with the effects of slow-onset disasters - deforestation and desertification - which if left unresolved can lead to sudden natural disasters.*

One of the priorities of the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD) was to counter the impact of drought and desertification in Africa.

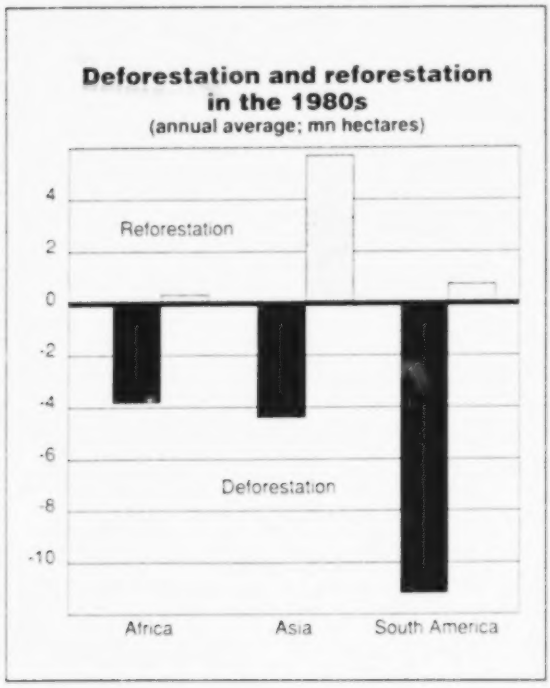
When UNPAAERD was launched, Africa was just emerging from a period of drought, bushfires, famine and food shortages which affected half the continent. Civil strife, however, continued to generate large numbers of refugees and displaced people, putting additional strain on resources. With the return of widespread shortages of rain in 1990, and a projected increase in poverty during the 1990s, Africa is facing long-term problems for its people and its environment.

By the early 1980s, Africa contained 37 per cent of the world's drylands (hyper-arid, or desert; semi-arid; and arid), which accelerated the rate of desertification in the continent. The worst affected regions centre on the Sahara, Kalahari and Namib deserts, and touch much of North Africa, West and Southwest Africa, stretching east to include Uganda, Kenya and Somalia.

UN/Milton Grant

Many Africans depend on wood and charcoal for household fuel. Though the need for it could double by the year 2000, its supply will soon be exhausted unless massive replanting is undertaken.

Furthermore virtually all African countries now have problems of varying degrees with deforestation, soil degradation and inadequate supply and distribution of water resources. Deforestation is continuing at such a pace that on average, only 9 trees are planted for every 100 that are cut down. In some countries fuelwood supplies will soon be exhausted unless massive replanting is undertaken. Yet most Africans depend on wood (and charcoal) for household fuel. With a fuelwood deficit estimated at about 72 mn cubic metres in



Africa loses over 3.8 million hectares of forest every year, less than in South America and Asia; its reforestation rate (9.2 per cent) is better than South America's but far worse than Asia's.

1980, Africa's needs could double by 2000.

Priorities for the 1990s

In response to this situation three-quarters of African countries have begun to develop policies of energy and natural resources management, while 10 countries now have specific policies for more efficient use of wood and charcoal, as well as for harnessing renewable energy sources. Efforts have also been made to encourage various techniques for soil protection and enhancement such as terracing, contour ploughing, crop rotation, and greater fertilizer use, as well as afforestation programmes (including fuelwood and community plantations). However, most African governments also lack financial resources to make sustained progress in the fight against desertification and other environmental degradation.

In the strategies and action plans for resource management which African countries are evolving with help from multilateral donors, particular focus is being placed on developing information systems for national planning and decision-making through expanded hydrometeorological networks, data processing and analysis, and their application to land use and agricultural practices. There is increasing emphasis on integrating land-use (including forestry, and pastoral rights), water resource development, and conservation, in a sustainable framework for long-term development.

National and international efforts are also aiming at strengthening regional organizations such as the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel in West Africa (CILSS), in East Africa, the Inter-governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), and the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA). Other organizations include the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the International Livestock Centre for Africa. These institutions all play a role in promoting afforestation, agricultural research, and the joint exploration and use of energy resources through training and research programmes on a regional basis.

Further impetus for regional cooperation comes from the fact that large inland waterways already have inter-governmental organizations charged with managing and protecting national resources, such as the Lake Chad Basin commission and the Senegal River Development Organization. At national level, water resources management is receiving growing priority, with several UN

(Continued on page 24)

The world is losing about 25 billion tonnes of topsoil every year, and in many regions, the rate of loss exceeds the rate of soil formation at least tenfold. North and Central Africa are among the areas of the world where cultivation of steep marginal lands, reduced forest and vegetative cover, and improper irrigation are expected to accelerate the rate of erosion and degradation of soils. The results that have already been observed include low crop yields, deterioration in the water retention capacity of soils, and falling soil fertility in a cycle of falling productivity and diminishing ability to sustain human life even as population growth increases demand for land and food.

Disasters and Databases: Experiences of the CRED EM-DAT Project

*by D.G. Sapir, & C. Misson**
Centre for Research on Disaster Epidemiology (CRED), University of Louvain, Brussels, Belgium

Introduction

The need for systematic data for the field of disaster response and management has been of increasing concern to relief agencies at both the international and the national levels. Until recently, agencies tended to approach the problem in an *ad hoc* manner, by collecting information at the time of the emergency. Often the resulting data was incomplete, outdated or unusable. The need to obtain more accurate, verifiable data after the disaster was rarely considered important enough to rank high on the list of funding and policy priorities.

This situation reflected a lack of professionalism that has cost international and national authorities years of relief expenditure without a corresponding reduction in future vulnerability. However, with an increase in the number of disasters which require external assistance, national governments and international aid agencies have recognized the need for a more systematic approach to disaster relief, and a fundamental change aimed at more rational, long-term, management-oriented policies is now taking place. This approach is spearheaded by major U.N. agencies, such as UNDRO, UNDP and WHO, as well as scientific institutions. Within this context, CRED began to explore the feasibility of constructing a system of databases to help strengthen the system of disaster management on a global basis. The three databases which were eventually designed are:

- **Disaster Events and their characteristics (EM-DAT);**
- **Disaster Institutional and Human Resources (EM-RES);**
- **Key facts related to Disasters by country (EM-FACT).**

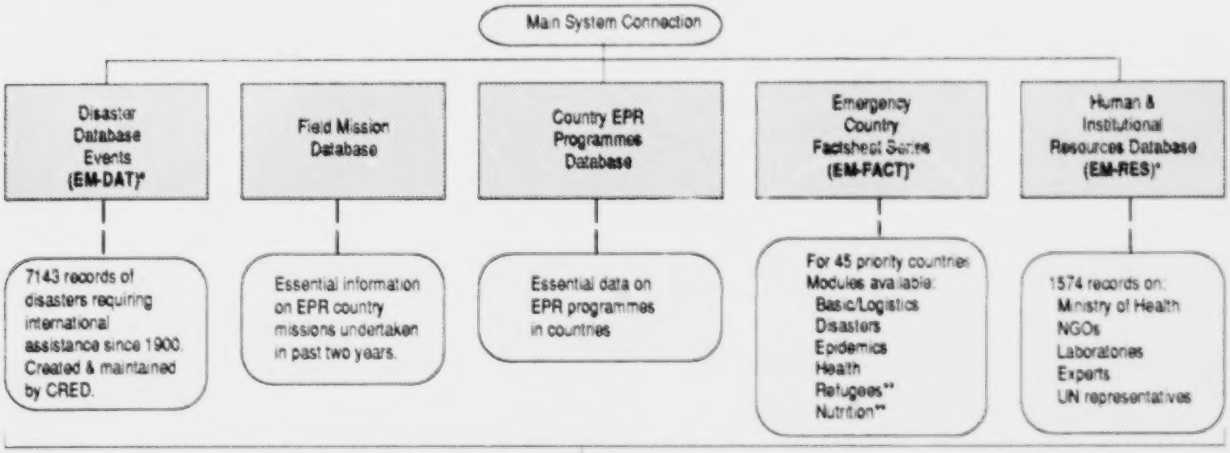
The first and third of these were implemented with the active support and collaboration of UNDRO and WHO. This article presents the first of these databases - Disaster Events Database or EM-DAT.

EM-DAT - Design and scope

The database EM-DAT was conceived as an integral part of a complete information system, the design of which is presented in *Figure 1*. It is a working database housed at CRED in Brussels and at UNDRO-Geneva. It operates by means of a compiled, menu-driven software programme and provides

**The authors would like to acknowledge the encouragement and support received from staff of UNDRO, who not only did what was required but significantly more. The World Health Organization provided generous support for the initial phase of this project. In addition, the following institutions and persons assisted immeasurably by detailed discussions, comments and enthusiasm throughout the development of this database: Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID; Munchener Ruckversicherungs Geselleschaft (Munich); Compagnie Suisse de Reassurance, Zurich; Mssrs. J.B. Miller (World Meteorological Organization), J. Duppenthaler, J. Woodall, (World Health Organization), and A. Velasquez (OSSO - Colombia).*

Figure 1
Emergency Management Information System
Layout for Data Bases



*PC software and data available for use
**Work on-going

options for data retrievals and simple statistical reports, as well as updates and modifications. Todate, it has approximately 7,200 records. Events are entered into the database immediately after notification by an automatic telex-telefax reporting system. The staff of UNDRO and CRED then verify the reports with information from alternate sources. In addition, case by case validation of data from 1960 onwards is undertaken on a continuing basis. All redundancies, inconsistencies and blanks are checked and corrected accordingly.

Criteria defining the entry of an event

The working criteria used for entering an event in the database are:

A disaster is entered when it is known to have killed at least 10 persons, or affected at least 100, or when an international appeal for assistance has been launched. Furthermore, any event that has entailed the displacement of 2,000 or more persons (not necessarily with fatalities) would be eligible for entry into the database. All chemical accidents are entered, even if no deaths or number of persons affected have been reported.

When considering conflicting information, priority ranking is given first to data from the government of the affected country, (which is usually identical to that of UNDRO), followed by USAID, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, insurance firms, specialized institutions and, finally, the press.

Limitations and ambiguities in disaster data

■ *Definition of a valid case*

The construction of a disaster database begins with the definition of a disaster - agreement on a universal definition of a disaster has generated an interminable, ongoing debate.

The various versions of disaster definitions used by agencies have been based, invariably, on their own needs. The definitions used by the WHO and UNDRO are as follows:

A disaster is any occurrence that causes damage, ecological disruption, loss of human life, deterioration of health and health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the affected community or area. (Extracted from : WHO Manual Section XV.4 article 20, 1/3/89).

For the purposes of the database, a stricter definition had to be formulated to enable the data manager to identify a valid case for entry. A newer definition, devised in collaboration with UNDRO, is in current use:

A serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources.

Disasters are often classified according to their speed of onset (sudden or slow), or according to their cause (natural or man-made).

The definition of a disaster, thus, encompasses the following categories of events:

- Sudden Natural Disasters including all those of geological origin (earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, volcanic activity, tsunami); hydrometeorological origin (floods); high winds (tropical cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons); extremes of weather (heat or cold); insect infestation.

- Natural disasters of gradual onset including drought and famine; epidemic diseases.

- Man-made disasters including mass conflicts (civil war, major riots); events of a political origin, not necessarily violent (displaced persons, mass evacuation, refugees, expellees); accidents (transportation, food or insecticide poisoning); chemical accidents (factory explosion, nuclear accident but excluding slow pollution).

■ *Ambiguity in typology*

It may seem desirable to have categories of disasters refined to include as many specific groups as possible. But this specialization would pose logistical problems by inflating the number of categories for the key variables in the records; furthermore, the use of numerous disaster type names would complicate the procedure for lay users.

An example of a problem caused by ambiguity in disaster typologies is the frequent confusion between the terms *drought* and *famine*. A famine can be caused by a drought. It can also be caused by a civil war (Mozambique 1987, Sudan 1990), insect infestation (potato blight in Ireland), and economic disequilibrium (Great Bengal famine 1941) or a siege (Netherlands 1944). These disasters could be entered into the database as famines - or as one of the described underlying causes.

Displacement of populations gives rise to a similar ambiguity. Displaced persons in the CRED database now include: all expellees (persons expelled from their country of residence, e.g. Indians from Uganda); returnees (persons obliged to return to their home countries, e.g. Mozambicans from South Africa); and refugees (persons obliged to leave their home country due to religious, racial, or political persecution). Other groups belonging to this category are those persons displaced due to food scarcity or to civil war. Often such people have moved within their own country and therefore are not regarded as refugees or expelled persons.

The problem of ambiguity in typology is handled at present by entering the disaster as an exact event, together with all other relevant information, thus allowing the user to extract and re-create new categories as appropriate.

■ *Ambiguity in dates*

The declared date for a disaster, such as a famine, can be necessary for database purposes and at the same time be nearly meaningless in terms of the actual phenomenon. Famines do not originate on a single date; nor do displacements of populations. Civil strife, can, on occasion, erupt on a specific date, but it can also build up over time. Similarly, there is rarely a precise date for the outbreak of an epidemic. Dates publicized for these events can be as much a political decision as a matter of fact.

When considering severe disasters (cyclones, earthquakes, flash floods) one frequently finds cases with two different recording dates. The declared date of the emergency may vary according to the source: external agencies may announce an emergency situation before the national authorities do, or the contrary may occur. For natural disasters, the solution to such confusion is relatively easy, since the physical occurrence of earthquakes, cyclones and other sudden natural events are well monitored and can be verified by accurate, scientifically-measured information. The EM-DAT procedure is to correct all dates of severe, natural disasters according to the exact recorded time of occurrence provided by technical, meteorological and seismic institutions.

■ *Ambiguities in numeric information*

There are five numeric variables which require exact values. These are *persons killed, affected, homeless, injured* and the *monetary value of losses sustained*. Each of these has ambiguities of definition which require clarification for a reliable data base.

Due to the lack of a standard method for recording the precise number of lives lost as an immediate consequence of a disaster, the number of **persons killed** often includes all those confirmed dead, as well as all those missing and presumed dead.

Persons injured may include those with physical injuries requiring immediate medical attention or

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UNDRO at Work

September/October 1991

Relief: Mobilization and Co-ordination

■ **Cambodia:**

The floods have subsided and current activities focus on mid-term rehabilitation. UNDRO issued five additional Situation Reports between 4 and 26 September, specifying urgent relief needs. Over US $5 million in contributions were reported to UNDRO. Total number of people affected was estimated at 650,000, as at mid-October.

❒ On 4 October, the UNDRO consultant who provided assistance in Pnom Penh from 31 August to 5 September was debriefed in Geneva.

■ **China:** An amount of SF18,000 has been raised through a UN staff collection in Geneva for victims of the floods which hit eastern China in June-August this year. These funds will be used for rebuilding a primary school in Lu He County Xin Jin

Township in Jiangsu province. The cheque was handed over by the Executive Secretary of the UNOG Staff Co-ordinating Council to the Chief of the UNDRO Relief Co-ordination Branch, on 14 October 1991.

■ **Guatemala - Earthquake and Floods:** On 18 September 1991, an earthquake of magnitude 5.3 in the Richter scale struck an area located at about 60-100 km southwest of Guatemala city. The earthquake was followed by several aftershocks and by landslides and floods. Fourteen people died in this disaster.

An UNDRO senior relief officer assisted the Government and the UN Resident Co-ordinator in the assessment of damage and needs and UNDRO issued five Information Reports on this emergency.

■ **Gulf:**

Phase III: UNDRO continues to provide overall co-ordination support to the Secretary-General's Executive Delegate. In this co-ordination function, UNDRO hosts and chairs the weekly meetings of the UN Inter-Agency Working Group, issues information and financial reports, notifies the Allied Command of data relevant to relief flights into Iraq, and organizes information meetings with the international community as required.

❒ **Financial Situation Report:** The pledges and contributions recorded by UNDRO for the "United Nations Inter-Agency Programme for Iraq, Kuwait and the Iraq/Turkey and Iraq/Iran Border Areas" have increased to US $285 million. This represents 68% of the total funding needs which, according to the updated plan of action, will amount to US $418 million by 31 December 1991.

■ **Mozambique:**

UNDRO participated in a **UN Inter-Agency mission** to the country, from 14 to 25 October. The purpose of the mission was to assess the current

emergency situation and assist in the preparation of updated relief requirements.

❒ **A National Seminar on Disaster Prevention** took place in Maputo from 9 to 11 October. The first day of the seminar coincided with the first anniversary of the IDNDR. The UNDRO delegate in Mozambique made a presentation on the subject.

❒ In September 1990, UNDRO had received US $1 million from the EEC, for the procurement and distribution of relief supplies, for a one year period. The final part of the distribution operations, which started in May 1991, was completed in September 1991. More than 200,000 people from 21 districts in the Central and Southern provinces of Mozambique, benefitted from these operations.

■ **Romania - Floods:** Emergency health kits from the UNICEF warehouse in Copenhagen, Denmark, were procured and airlifted by UNDRO to Bucarest in September, thanks to a cash contribution from the United Kingdom Government. Total contributions for this emergency reported to UNDRO amounted to US $570,434.

■ **Solomon Islands - Earthquake:** An Information Report was issued by UNDRO following an earthquake measuring 7,3 on the Richter scale, near the North coast of Santa Isabel island on 14 October.

■ **Somalia:**

Within the framework of the United Nations consolidated programme for the Horn of Africa, UNDRO dispatched to Somalia in mid-October a senior field delegate specialized in civil strife emergency situations. The delegate will assist the United Nations Special Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations (UNSCERO) and will ensure the implementation of the UNDRO relief programme. Initially he will use Djibouti as a logistics base and operate in Northern Somalia.

❒ At the request of UNSCERO, UNDRO finalized preparations for an airlift of relief supplies to Berbera. The plane departed from the UNDRO Pisa warehouse on 19 October 1991. The value of the airlift was tentatively estimated at US $250,000. The cargo consisted of blankets, tents, plastic pails, jerrycans, shovels, tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, pickaxes and saws donated by the Italian Government through UNDRO to the relief programmes of SCF and OXFAM UK, MSF Netherlands and local authorities; six tons of biscuits donated by Diakonisches Werk, a German NGO, through UNDRO for the MSF Hospital in Burao; 1.3 tons of furniture, tenting and other suppplies belonging to SCF/UK for its programme in Northern Somalia.

■ **Viet Nam - Floods:** The Southern part of the country was hit by a new series of floods, following heavy rains in the Mekong Delta. An Information Report was issued by UNDRO on 26 September.

■ **Operational Emergency Co-ordination:** Following the conclusions of the International Search and Rescue Workshop 1991, convened by UNDRO and hosted by the Austrian Government, UNDRO has initiated and is currently preparing two projects in the area of operational relief co-ordination: the setting up of a special desk in UNDRO to develop Operational Co-ordination Systems, and the holding of an Inaugural Meeting in mid-December in Beuggen, Germany, of an International and Rescue Advisory Committee.

Disaster Mitigation

■ **Egypt:** A working meeting was organized in UNDRO on 11 September 1991, to assess results of a technical co-operation project designed to work out a study on national disaster management capacity in respect of natural and industrial disasters. The Egypt delegation was headed by H.E. Dr. Adel Ezz, Minister of Scientific Research and H.E. Dr. Abdel Moungui Abou Aziz, Minister, President of the Academy of Scientfic Research and Technology. Important conclusions were taken at the meeting on how to strengthen co-operation in disaster management planning.

■ **USSR:**

UNDRO/UNDP and the Government of the USSR are jointly organizing a training seminar on **"Strategical Aspects of Disaster Management Planning"**, Moscow, 28 October - 1 November 1991. The Seminar is designed for specialists from developing disaster-prone countries. The work-programme includes discussions on UNDRO's mandate in relief

and disaster management planning, hazard classification, preparation of scenarios, stock taking, vulnerability analysis, preparation of disaster management plans, governmental policy for the reduction of disaster consequences, developed countries' experience in the oreganization of management planning, field consultants to make presentations and lead discussions. Participants also plan to discuss presentations on the experience of developing disaster-prone countries in disaster management.

❒ Meetings were held in Geneva in August on the occasion of a visit of a **Soviet delegation** headed by General Nikolai Dolgin, Deputy Chairman, the USSR Civil Defence. The participants discussed the implementation practice of UNDRO/USSR training seminars, co-opeeration in disaster relief and made recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of their co-operation.

■ From 15 to 27 September, an UNDRO delegate from the Disaster Mitigation Branch attended a **Training Seminar on Seismic Hazard Assessment and Policy Issues related to reconstruction after a disaster.** The Seminar, which took place at the Faculty of Engineering in Udine, Italy, particularly focused on seismic activity in the Mediterranean region.

Information, Communications, Exchange of Views and Contacts

■ The Co-ordinator of UNDRO gave an address at an international conference, on "**Policies of solidarity in the new international context; the responsibilities of Europe and Italy's role**" which was organized by the Italian Government, in Rome, from 17 to 19 October.

■ **Summit Conference on Earthquake and Natural Disaster Countermeasures 1991:** The Director of UNDRO gave an address at the above-mentioned conference, which was held in Tokyo from 8 to 11 October. During his stay in Japan he also had extensive and fruitful discussions on reinforcing co-operation between Japan and UNDRO, which involved the Office of the Prime Minister/Land Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

■ **Meeting of the Special High Level Council on IDNDR:** The UNDRO Co-ordinator made a presentation at this newly-established council which held its first meeting in New York for two days, starting on the occasion of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, on 9 October. The Council considered the Decade programme and activities to be undertaken by its members to promote prevention and preparedness in their respective countries and regions.

■ On the occasion of the celebration of the **International IDNDR Day in Fribourg**, Switzerland, on 9 October, the Chief of the Disaster Mitigation Branch made a presentation on the activities of the IDNDR Secretariat and on the activities of the Office. Mr. Tomblin was also invited to atttend a meeting of the IDNDR Swiss National Committee.

■ **A United Nations Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities**, attended by delegates from ten UN Organizations and Agencies, was hosted by UNDRO in Geneva, on 20-21 September. Main topics on the agenda included the implementation of the recommendations of the Second UN Conference on the "Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space", co-ordination of plans and programmes and exchange of views on current activities in the practical application of space technology co-operation, within the UN system, in the field of remote-sensing activities as well as planning and co-ordination of activities of UN organizations for the International Space Year.

■ UNDRO co-sponsored, with the Outer Space Affairs Division, New York, and with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), a **UN Regional Workshop on the Application of Space Techniques to Combat Natural Disasters**. The workshop, organized in co-operation with the Government of the People's Republic of China, was held in Beijing from 23 to 27 September. A keynote address was given by an UNDRO delegate who also made a presentation on the use of satellite terminals in disaster management.

■ **Horn of Africa:** UNDRO organized an Information Meeting at its Geneva Headquarters on 18 September, following the pledging conference held in New York on 16 September and the consolidated inter-agency appeal for the special emergency programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA).

■ **Workshop on Disaster Terminology:** Representatives of nine international agencies and seven countries took part in this five-day workshop, organized by UNDRO in Prague, Czechoslovakia from 23 to 27 September. The primary aim of the workshop, which was attended by UNDRO's Director, the Chief of the Disaster Mitigation Branch and an UNDRO consultant, was to review the classification of disaster concepts and the definition of 281 "leading terms".

■ A meeting of Experts on the **Transborder Use of Land Mobile Earth Stations,** organized by the International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT), in London from 15 to 17 October, was attended by an UNDRO official. The meeting focused on measures to facilitate transborder use of satellite terminals for emergency operations.

■ **Expansion of Pisa Warehouse:** The Disaster Relief Co-ordinator signed on 1 September 1991 an agreement for the rental of two additional warehouses measuring a total of some 800 square metres situated at the civilian airport in Pisa. This allowed UNDRO to almost double the storage capacity of the Pisa warehouse and to start using warehouse space immediately next to the runways where non-military aircraft chartered for relief operations take off and land.

UNDRO Warehouse in Pisa

Goods donated by the Governments of Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway and USSR

Blankets
- 150X200 cm (80% wool)
- 150X210 cm (50% wool)
- 150X220 cm (60% wool)

Tents
- (12.5 m2)
- (24 m2)
- (32 m2)
- (43 m2)
- (46 m2)

Plastic water tanks
- (3,000 l)
- (3,500 l)
- (7,500 l)

Jerrycans (15 l)

Tarpaulins (24 m2)

Plastic sheeting
- (365 m2)
- (400 m2)

Plastic pails

Generators
- (4 kva)
- (6.5 kva)
- (12 kva)

Trailers for generators

Transformers

Extensible cables (50 m)

Kitchen sets

Mallets

Pickaxes

Saws

Shovels

Spades

Nylon rope (reels 200 m)

Thermic containers

NBC Protection cloth

A kitchen set is composed of various cooking and table utensils

For further details and information on availability of goods in stock, please call UNDRO Geneva 7346011 - Ext..: 3290.

■ On 23-25 September 1991, an UNDRO delegation, headed by the Chief of the Relief Co-ordination Branch, held extensive discussions with the Italian General Direction for Development Co-operation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, on questions regarding the **co-operation between Italy and UNDRO, concerning the Pisa Warehouse.** The delegation also visited the Civil Protection facilities located in Castelnuovo di Porto, near Rome.

■ **Search and Rescue:** In the light of the recent co-operation between UNDRO and the Swedish Rescue Team, an UNDRO delegate was invited to follow a search and rescue exercise (KARO), which took place at Rosesberg Rescue Service College, in Sweden, between 25 and 27 October. The purpose of the exercise was to test plans for the Swedish immediate response capacity on international disasters.

■ An UNDRO delegate attended on 28 September the inauguration of an **Icelandic Rescue Teams association,** "Landsbjörg". This organization is composed of several Icelandic rescue groups from all over the country, specialized in all aspects of rescue and relief operations. The organization will form an integrated part of the national emergency response system in Iceland.

■ **UNDRO Fellowships:** The UNDRO programme of fellowships for disaster management training was initiated in 1988 to finance training of nationals from developing countries. The Fellowships aim at improving the skills of individuals involved in disaster management, at regional, local or national level. This programme has been made possible thanks to a US $80,000 contribution from the Swedish Government. Finland has recently made a contribution of US $50,000 which enabled UNDRO to sponsor a total of ten applicants.

■ **UNIENET News:**

Enhancement of Information Management, Communications and Office Systems (IMCOS): Following recent contributions from the Governments of Finland, Germany and Japan, UNDRO has undertaken initial steps to strengthen its information management capacity.

(Continued on page 23)

Disaster Library "KIT" Programme for South Pacific Countries

An information "KIT" has been compiled by UNDRO's Reference Library. The "KIT" contains a collection of bibliographic information on publications pertaining to disasters prevalent in the South Pacific region: i.e. cyclones, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, droughts and landslides.

What is it for?
It is intended to be a useful information tool for all established and future disaster centres, as well as serving as core material for the creation of small libraries in the various countries in the South Pacific region.

What do you get for US $35,-?
You will get a complete KIT, dealing with general disaster and environmental management. The information provided includes title, author, publisher, table of contents and number of pages on about 200 publications.

Copies of the brochure describing the contents of the "KIT" or copies of the "KIT" are available from:

UNDRO Reference Library
Att.: I. Nilsson, Palais des Nations - CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
Fax.: (+4122) 7335623.
or
UNDRO/South Pacific Project Office - Att.: J. Chung
c/o UNDP - Private Mail Bag
Suva, Fiji.

UNDRO South Pacific Programme Office (SPPO)

UNDRO's South Pacific Programme Office, based in Suva, Fiji, has recently published the following documents:

❑ Pacific Disaster News

The first issue of this quarterly newsletter, which was published in August, contains articles on:

- ❑ "The missing link in disaster planning"
- ❑ "Finding the way to help disaster victims"
- ❑ "Insurance protection against disaster".

The editor would welcome comments, articles, information on disaster management activities for inclusion in the newsletter, which should be sent to: *UNDRO/SPPO Newsletter - Attention Newsletter Department (at the address given below).*

❑ Seminar Report: Strengthening Disaster Management in the South Pacific

The above regional seminar, hosted by SPPO and Forum jointly, was held at the Forum Secretariat Headquarters in Suva earlier this year. The participants included 12 senior government officials from ten Pacific Island countries, all but two of whom were currently chairpersons on the National Disaster Councils of their respective countries, and representatives from Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, UN agencies (including UNDRO, UNDP, FAO and WHO and the Asian Development Bank).

A report on the proceedings of the seminar is now available. It covers the discussions held on:

- ❑ the different levels of development of the Pacific Island countries in the area of disaster management and the national or regional areas identified as requiring priority assistance.
- ❑ the various parameters used by the different agencies, including NGOs, in the provision of assistance within the wide spectrum of disaster management, and
- ❑ the recommendations made by the South Pacific Mitigation Needs Assessment mission on the role of UNDRO/SPPO in the South Pacific to enable the SPPO to operate at the most efficient and effective levels.

Copies of the report are available from: UNDRO/SPPO c/o UNDP - Private Mail Bag - Suva, Fiji - Fax.: (679) 304942.

Waiting for the Caribou

- an UNDRO-sponsored documentary depicting an emergency airlift in Mozambique.

This 30-minute film, produced and directed by Peter Entell, tells the story of Tomas Muheusa, a warehouse worker in the capital of Mozambique, as he travels for the first time into the war-torn countryside, where millions of people have fled their homes, and witnesses what an emergency airlift operation is really like.

The film has been selected for the 23rd International Film Festival, to be held at Nyon, Switzerland from 12 to 20 October 1991.

Copies of the video version of Waiting for the Caribou *(price US $50) can be obtained, as follows: (Original language: Portuguese) VHS PAL: subtitles in English, French or Italian. VHS NTSC: subtitles in English or French. Orders to be sent to:*

UNDRO
Palais des Nations - Office 301-5
CH 1211 Geneva 10 - Switzerland
Tel.: (4122) 7346011 - 7310211 - Fax.: (4122) 7335623

Disasters and Databases: Experience of the CRED EM-DAT Project

(Continued from page 15)

hospitalisation. It is unclear whether the estimates reported include those people receiving ambulatory care provided at the site of the disaster as well as those who were removed to a hospital. The **EM-DAT** procedure is to register all injuries in disasters which invariably cause acute physical injury, such as earthquakes, cyclones, avalanches. Disasters such as famines or epidemics do not record injuries, only the number of dead and affected. In the case of epidemics, the disease cases are entered as "affected".

Persons affected by a disaster is a concept extremely difficult to define since a wide variety of parameters are encompassed by the term. For example, in famines and civil strife, a major breakdown in the social and economic structure is the quintessential element responsible for the human impact. The number of the population affected by this element will always remain an "estimated range".

■ *Discrepancies in reporting units*

Disparities in monetary information also pose a problem. Losses can be reported in US dollars or local currency but when recorded would preclude a comparative analysis by years or by country, i.e. the type of information most frequently required of the database. The uniform transformation of all reported losses to one currency unit (US dollar or Swiss Franc) could be programmed into the database, but unless it was standardized to a base index value, it would lose its comparability over time.

Currently, **EM-DAT** maintains some estimates on losses incurred due to disasters, but the quality of data - in terms of its comparability, completeness and accuracy - is of little use. Insurance companies may seem to be a good source for damage estimates, but the statistics they provide would only reflect insured not real damage. Furthermore in developing countries, personal property is insured only by the wealthier members of the community, making the use of insurance data seriously misleading for relief and rehabilitation purposes.

Another discrepancy in reporting arises in the case of *affected* and *homeless* where the given unit might be an individual or an entire family. The current procedure is to transform all figures into a unit indicating one individual by multiplying the family unit by the average expected family size in the region of the disaster.

Conclusions and future developments

A valid and useful database on disasters is dependent on the fundamental clarity of its underlying concepts and definitions. In a field that has only recently received professional and scientific interest, this conceptual development is in its nascent stage. Individual disciplines which have been traditionnally involved in disaster research (geology, engineering, meteorology, earth and atmospheric sciences) have their own definitions and systems of information. However, a multi-disciplinary database becomes an extremely complex exercise since it requires an optimal compilation of data from disciplines with different conceptual bases.

Many of the disaster data problems would be resolved if robust field methodologies to estimate figures given for the dead, the injured and the affected were developed and used by the relief agencies. Ambivalence in numbers which encompass an unspecified variety of groups or conditions render all data valueless. Standard methodologies that can be used by every agency are urgently needed to prevent ambiguous data from becoming the source of misguided policy and erroneous decision-making.

The two main directions in which the EM-DAT project envisages its development are: *First*, the scope of its contents will be expanded to include economic information on donor response, and efforts will be made to improve the statistics on estimated loss. *Second*, physical characteristics will be included in the geo-references of the event such as indices of wind speeds and paths, and scales of intensity.

Experience so far, has demonstrated the feasibility of such an enterprise. There is, however, an important qualification for the second phase of its development which remains essential for its success. CRED has already established an informal association with some of the main centres in the field of disaster data collection, - a collaborative structure between the relevant disciplines and a working network will become the key to its future development. ■

UNDRO at Work

(Continued from page 19)

❒ Presentations of the network were made at: the Inter-Agency meeting on Outer Space Activities on 19 September; the meeting of International Agencies on Disaster Information, hosted by the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on 17 October.

■ **UNDRO New York Office:**

On 16 September 1991, the Director of UNDRO/ New York, attended a **pledging conference on the Horn of Africa** in response to a United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for US $400 million to help alleviate the suffering of millions of people in the area. NGOs and Agencies representatives addressed the Conference urging for generous contributions from donors. UNDRO appealed for US $1.5 million emergency programme aid to Somalia covering collection and dissemination of information on needs, assistance to Somali authorities in the co-ordination and distribution of aid, active support of UNDRO representatives in co-ordination efforts, air-lifts and/or sea shipments of relief supplies.

❒ On 27 September 1991, a representative of the N.Y. Office attended in New York an inter-agency meeting on co-operation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA). The meeting allowed participants to exchange views on their activities in the area, ending with the signing of a Co-operative Agreement between the United Nations and SELA.

❒ **US Conference on International Military Operations and Law (USCINCPAC) (Honolulu, 16-20 September 1991):** The Director of UNDRO New York represented UNDRO at this meeting. It was the first time that the US military command in the Pacific invited a United Nations representative to attend and to make a presentation on the work of the United Nations in disaster relief, including the use of the military in such operations.

■ **Visitors to UNDRO Headquarters in Geneva between 31 August and 31 October 1991 included:**

Mr. A. Nouri, Minister of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran, accompanied by Ambassador *S. Nasseri*; the following Permanent Representatives to UNOG: Ambassador *A. Bisley* (New Zealand); Ambassador *J. Swift* (the Republic of Ireland); Ambassador *NGO Hac Team,* (Cambodia); Ambassador *W. Lang* (Austria); Ambassador *M. Ennaceur* (Tunisia); Ambassador *K. Mutuale* (the Republic of Zaire); Ambassador *F. Valenzuela* (Spain); *Mr. S. Van Voorst Tot Voorst,* Co-ordinator of the Humanitarian and Emergency Aid Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of the Netherlands, who chaired the Fourth NERS Meeting on 1-2 October; *Dr. C. Djeddah,* WHO Representative in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; *Mr. J. Manent,* Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the UNOG; *Mr. G. Hewitt,* Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the UNOG; *Mr. Priestley,* Special Adviser to UNDP Administrator; *Mr. R. Nilsson* and *Mr. B. Larsson,* National Rescue Services, Sweden; *Mr. P.A. Bearpark,* Director ODA, United Kingdom; *Mr. J. Egeland,* Personal Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway; *Mr. G.S. Vartanian* from the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences and *Mr. V.S. Matveev* from the Russian Institute of Hydrology and Engineering Geology.

Mr. M. Essaafi greeting the Prime Minister of Afghanistan Mr. F. Khaleqyar, who was accompanied by the Minister for Planning, Mr. M. Shahbaz, (above right) and the Permanent Representative to UNOG, Ambassador M.N. Amani.

❒ The Resident Co-ordinator in Afghanistan (Mr. D. Lockwood) and the Resident Representative in Syria (Mr. Hla) visited UNDRO to provide first hand information on the countries were they serve and to be briefed on the activities of the Office. ■

UNDRO and the LRCCS agree to co-operate in disaster management

On 3 October 1991, the Chief Executives of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator signed a Memorandum of Understanding, under which they agreed to co-operate in improving their disaster relief management activities worldwide, in order to render better and more lasting assistance to disaster victims and strengthen preparedness activities.

The Memorandum of Understanding is a comprehensive agreement which notes the intention of the two organizations to co-operate, through the sharing of expertise and information, in assessing disaster damage and needs, providing rapid, accurate information to the international donor community, and producing compatible aid appeals.

Among its provisions, the agreement calls for the two institutions to support each other's relief operations, to pool know-how on relief supplies and logistics, and to establish effective communications systems between disaster sites and the outside world.

Mr. Pär Stenbäck, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Mr. M. Essaafi, UN Disaster Relief Co-ordinator signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

Under the agreement the two institutions will also work together to mitigate the effects of disasters by promoting the study, prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters and undertaking joint technical assistance projects.

The Memorandum of Understanding, which will enter into force after ratification by the League's General Assembly, brings the total of such documents which UNDRO has signed with UN agencies intergovernmental organizations, and other concerned organizations, to 24. ■

Managing the Environment: An African Dimension

(Continued from page 12)

agencies helping in improving rainwater collection and conservation.

The twin imperatives for Africa of protecting the environment and increasing agricultural output in a sustainable manner will require the conscious and active participation of local communities. There is a growing consensus that without them, national governments, non-governmental and international organizations will be unable to make the transition from isolated short-term projects to the long-term, integrated programmes for environmental protection that Africa needs.

International efforts are now geared towards tackling a broad agenda at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in June 1992. With Africa already in deep economic crisis, and facing significant increases in both population and poverty levels, the continent has welcomed the joining together of the two issues of environment and development at the top of the international agenda, under the now common understanding that one cannot be resolved at the expense of the other.

The above extracts are taken, with permission of the editors, from an article which appeared in ***Africa Recovery*** *in September 1991.* ■

Catastrophes : Nouvel ordre mondial et devoir d'ingérence

(Continued from page 10)

passer de la construction juridique prédominante, qui est celle de l'Etat laïc, et construire des structures plus accueillantes pour d'autres civilisations, pour la diversité de l'ordre international. Dans de nombreux Etats, la religion joue un rôle important. Au XIXe siècle, en Europe, la religion, les religions, même dans les guerres, ont joué un rôle extrêmement important. C'est une aventure récente des Européens, cette séparation du rationnel religieux pour atteindre le rationnel civil. Si l'on va vers "un nouvel ordre international", il faudra y penser. Aujourd'hui, on cherche à expliquer au public ce qu'il doit faire. Dès lors que vous arrivez à capter l'attention de l'opinion publique, à influencer, vous avez déjà acquis le bénéfice essentiel qui est celui d'être le champion du droit. Le droit c'est la démonstration de ce que vous parvenez à faire. C'est-à-dire que c'est vieux comme le monde. Celui qui gagne devient "le bon droit". Si Hitler avait gagné, il n'aurait pas eu la même conception du droit et des droits individuels que les vainqueurs du deuxième grand conflit mondial. Est-ce que les vaincus doivent être rayés de la responsabilité du monde moderne ? Pour s'en tirer sans répondre, on invente **le *devoir d'assistance.*** Il y a une superbe définition, pardonnez-moi de citer notre Président de la République : "La non-ingérence s'arrête là où commence la non-assistance". Je traduis, car c'est peut-être difficile à comprendre : il suffit de ne pas s'ingérer, c'est-à-dire se laver les mains, laisser les gens se faire massacrer ou mourir de faim, c'est selon.

Mais cette attitude prend fin au moment où l'on s'aperçoit que ce qu'on pratique en fait, c'est la non-assistance. Car il y aurait un devoir d'assistance. A partir de cette idée du devoir d'assistance, qui est particulièrement estimable, quoique déjà difficile à respecter. L'escalade est rapide. Si vous ne pouvez pas exercer ce ***devoir d'assistance,*** parce qu'un Etat dit que vous n'avez pas le droit de vous ingérer dans ses affaires intérieures, alors vous êtes tentés de parler du ***devoir d'ingérence.*** Et après, vous évoquerez le ***droit d'ingérence.*** C'est le pouvoir déclaratif. On dit qu'il y a un droit d'ingérence. Mais il y a la pratique : c'est bien d'avoir le droit d'ingérence, mais pour l'exercer, il faut avoir le ***pouvoir d'ingérence.*** Le pouvoir d'ingérence, c'est plus pratique : il faut des moyens, il faut la puissance, il faut l'influence, la détermination et forcément quelques *a priori*. Le pouvoir d'ingérence est un pouvoir considérable, qui ne peut que se remettre à quelques-uns. Je prends un exemple stupide : où est le pouvoir d'ingérence de Monaco sur la France ? ... Avant de se lancer tête baissée dans cet univers de ***l'ingérence,*** attentatoire d'ailleurs aux dispositions de la Charte des Nations Unies, il faut savoir ce que nous voulons et pour qui.

JOBERT (Michel), Magistrat à la cour des comptes (E.R.), Homme politique, Ancien ministre. **Né** le 11 septembre 1921 à Meknès (Maroc). **Fils de** Jules Jobert, Ingénieur agronome, **et de** Mme, née Yvonne Babule. **Mar.** à Mlle Muriel Frances Green (1 enf.: Marc.). Etudes : Lycées de Rabat et de Meknès. **Dipl.:** Diplômé de l'Ecole libre des sciences politiques. **Carr.:** Elève à l'Ecole nationale d'administration (1947-48), Auditeur (1949) puis Conseiller référendaire (1953) à la Cour des comptes, Membre de cabinets ministériels (1952-56) [Finances (Pierre Abelin), Travail et Sécurité sociale (Paul Bacon), présidence du Conseil et Ministre d'Etat (Pierre Mendès France)], Directeur de cabinet du haut commissaire de la République en Afrique-Occidentale française (1956-58), Directeur de cabinet de Robert Lecourt (ministre d'Etat) (1959-61), Directeur adjoint (1963-66) puis Directeur (1966-68) de cabinet de Georges Pompidou (Premier Ministre), Président du conseil d'administration de l'Office national des forêts (1966-73), Administrateur d'Havas (1968-73), de la Cité internationale de l'Université de Paris (1966), Secrétaire général de la présidence de la République (1969-73), Conseiller maître à la Cour des comptes (1971-86), Ministre des Affaires étrangères (1973-74), réintégré à la Cour des comptes (1974-81), Fondateur du Mouvement des démocrates (1974), Ministre d'Etat, Ministre du Commerce Extérieur (1981-83), Directeur du bulletin mensuel *la Lettre de Michel Jobert* (1974-84), Editorialiste du quotidien *Paris ce soir* (janvier-février 1985). **Œuvres :** *Mémoires d'avenir* (prix Aujourd'hui 1974), *les Idées simples de la vie* (1975), *l'Autre regard* (1976), *Lettre ouverte aux femmes politiques* (1976), *la Vie d'Hella Schuster* (roman, 1977), *Parler aux Français* (1977), *Maroc, extrême Maghreb du soleil couchant* (1978), *la Rivière aux grenades* (roman, 1982), *Chroniques du Midi libre* (1982), *Vive l'Europe libre* (en coll., 1983), *Par trente six chemins* (1984), *Maghreb, à l'ombre de ses mains* (1985), *les Américains* (1987), *Journal immédiat... et pour une petite éternité* (1987). **Décor.:** Officier de la Légion d'honneur, Croix de guerre 39.45.

■

Le devoir d'ingérence ou le pouvoir d'ingérence ne datent pas du printemps dernier. Sans remonter trop loin, toutes les opérations de la Sainte-Alliance, en 1815, sont montées au nom de la religion. (J'en reviens à mon propos de tout à l'heure.) Et au nom des princes et de leurs droits, toutes ces opérations étaient des opérations d'ingérence. D'abord contre le voeu des peuples, puisque les dangers de l'époque étaient l'idée de liberté et l'idée du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes. Le XIXe siècle fut celui de l'ingérence. Déjà l'Empire ottoman était cette personne malade, ce qui justifiait quelques ingérences dans ses affaires. Souvenez-vous, la Russie se sentait concernée, la Grande-Bretagne aussi, au nom de la liberté d'ailleurs, à cette époque, la France aussi. Elle est intervenue dans le Royaume de Sicile, en Espagne, au Portugal. Nous n'avons pas à nous surprendre de cela. Simplement je le rappelle car je ne crois pas que c'était une contribution apportée à l'équilibre mondial. On l'a bien vu, peu de temps après; au siècle suivant, la situation était déjà totalement dégradée. C'était la première guerre mondiale avec ses divisions datant de la Sainte-Alliance. Par conséquent, le devoir d'ingérence est à prendre en considération, avec une extrême prudence...

Dans la seconde partie de sa conférence, M. Michel Jobert, cite des exemples, passés et présents, d'interventions "au nom du droit d'ingérence", et souligne le fait que "toute la politique internationale consiste à faire comme si l'ordre ancien existait, alors qu'il a disparu."

"Il faut", affirme-t-il, "que nous ayons quelque logique et, nous situant au plan de l'universalité, des Nations Unies et du Droit des Nations Unies, nous souhaitions entendre l'Assemblée générale, qui a longtemps prêché dans le désert, pour des libertés formelles et politiques, et pour le développement. Qu'elle affirme que l'essentiel pour elle est de faire respecter l'humanité parmi les plus faibles. Après, on verra".

(Le texte complet de la Conférence de M. Michel Jobert peut-être obtenu, sur demande, à l'UNDRO, Palais des Nations, Genève).

■

BOOK REVIEW

Disaster Mitigation in Asia and the Pacific

published by the Asian Development Bank, 1991

The Asian Development Bank produced this study as a first step in developing national strategies for disaster mitigation and emergency preparedness in the Asian and Pacific region, in close co-ordination with the goals of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).

The study is primarily addressed to officials in the developing member countries (DMCs) of the Bank who are engaged in disaster management or are responsible for designing and implementing national economic development strategies. It is also addressed to the international donor community.

The study began with the preparation of five resource papers designed to provide a representative overview of disaster management principles in general and their specific application in the region. They comprise a technical background paper and four country studies on Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines and the South Pacific. The resource papers were then reviewed at a regional seminar (held in October 1990) for managers, planners and representatives of the international community involved in disaster mitigation activities. The study takes stock of the present state of disaster mitigation activities in the region and identifies the need for continued work.

Later this year, the Bank plans to produce a Disaster Manager's Manual designed to promote professionalism at the national level.

Disaster Mitigation is available, free-of-charge, from: *Information Office - Asian Development Bank P. O. Box 789 - 1099 Manila, Philippines.* ■

COURSES

Emergency Management Institute, Maryland, USA
Resident Courses

The mandate of the Emergency Management Institute is to serve as a national focal point for the development and delivery of emergency management technical training and professional education to enhance the mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities of Federal, State and local government emergency managers and others in the public and private sectors who have responsibility for serving the public in time of disaster or emergency.

The Institute is located on the 107-acre National Emergency Training Center campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, USA.

The Institute offers resident courses on: Community preparedness programmes, Professional development, Hazardous materials, Natural hazards, Radiological hazards, National security, and other training activities.

A brochure listing the courses available from October 1991 to September 1992 can be obtained from:

Emergency Management
Institute - 16825 South Seton Ave.
Emmitsburg, MD 21727, USA.

CONFERENCES

International Symposium on Rescue Dogs

A four-day symposium, organized by the German Rescue Dog Association (GeRDA), will be held in Berlin from 11 to 14 November 1991.

Topics in the series of lectures to be given at the symposim will include:

- "Earthquakes and seismic waves"
- "Water search in the USA"
- "The use of rescue dogs in mines"
- "Complementing the rescue-dog alerts with technical equipment"
- "Natural science basics for animal training".

The symposium will be conducted in German and English, and simultaneous translation in both languages will be provided.

For further information contact:
Mr. W. Heines - President
Fliederstrasse 5 - 6704 Mutterstadt
Germany.

International Conference - Technical Support for Refugees
Loughborough University of Technology, United Kingdom
17 - 18 December 1991

Recent natural and man-made disasters in Mozambique, Sudan, Ethiopia, Philippines, Iraq, Liberia, Bangladesh, Somalia and China have highlighted the problems of providing appropriate and immediate technical support (such as water supply, sanitation, and shelter) to refugees. Despite the frequency with which such disasters occur, it is still common to find the response poorly prepared and uncoordinated. Infrastructure is often slow to arrive, inappropriate and improperly installed. If victims of future disasters are to be helped more effectively, relief staff must learn from past mistakes and consider ways of improving their response. This conference has been organized to assist with this process.

The conference will have two aims:

- To provide an opportunity for people involved in technical support for refugees to get together and discuss their successes and failures and learn from each others experiences.
- To develop a number of policy guidelines covering key areas of technical response so that future disasters are dealt with more effectively.

For further details of the Conference, please contact:

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